(b) if so, the present status of the proposal; and

(c) the difficulties being experienced in implementing the present Act and the specific provisions thereof sought to be amended ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD) : (a) to (c) The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2000 seeking to amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to make it more effective while eliminating unnecessary harassment to genuine traders has already been introduced in Lok Sabha on 8-3-2000. The amendments include increase in fines and imprisonment; making all offences cognizable and non-bailable except minor offences committed for the first time; requirement of prior permission of an officer not below the rank of Executive Magistrate for making entry, search and seizure; power of arrest to be exercised by an officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector of Police; sale of seized goods through the Public Distribution System; provision for allowance of margin between physical stock and stock in record; appeal against confiscation to lie with the State Government and deletion of the item "component parts and accessories of automobiles" from the list of essential commodities.

Voters Identity Cards as Ration Cards

4150. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Voters Identity Cards issued by the Election Commission of India wherein it is clearly written,—"This card may be used as an identity card under different Government Schemes" can be used in an application for a ration card;

(b) if so, whether any instructions have been given to various Departments in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) to (c) PDS is operated under the joint responsibility of Central and State Governments. Implementation of TPDS including identification of beneficiaries and issue of ration cards is the responsibility of State Government

concerned. State Governments and various Central Government Departments have been requested that ration cards should not be used as documents for establishing identity or proof of residence. Other valid documents like voters identity cards, passport, identity cards issued by Income Tax authorities can be considered for verifying the identity of persons.

Prof. Abhijit Sen Committee on quality norms of Foodgrains

4151. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Prof. Abhijit Sen Committee has recommended that quality norms of grains should be adhered to and not relaxed at the request of grains producing States; and

(b) if so, the policy decision taken in the matter ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The High Level Committee on Long Term Grain Policy under the Chairmanship of Prof. Abhijit Sen in its interim report has recommended that the Fair Average Quality (FAQ) norms be strictly adhere). If any State Government requests for relaxation of quality norms, this should ıe invariable accompanied by an appropriate price reduction, besides exemption rom statutory State levies.

(b) The final report of Prof. Abhijit Sen Committee is awaited. A final iew will be taken thereafter.

Cost of wheat storage in States

4152. SHRI P. K. MAHESHWARI : Will the Min[illegible] of CONSUMER AIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

the storage cost of wheat per tonne in Punjab, [illegible]na and the cities ai and Kolkata, separately;

b) whether the storage charges are paid uniformly by Government to all ncies all over the country; and

(c) whether this cost is less than the cost of storage broke by FCI itself in ab, Haryana, Mumbai and Kolkata ?